

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O P 161320Z JUN 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1151
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 5614

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS OTHER ADDRESSEES AS APPROPRIATE

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MASS, GR, TU
SUBJ: U.S.- GREEK DEFENSE COOPERATION: JUNE 16 MEETING WITH BITSIOS

REF: A) ATHENS 5595, B) STATE 138322

1. SUMMARY. IN MY MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS TODAY I SET FORTH IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS WHAT THE USG POSITION WAS ON RESUMING AND FINISHING THE DEFENSE COOPERATION NEGOTIATIONS. IN THE END, BITSIOS SEEMED FAVORABLY DISPOSED BUT SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CABINET. HE PROMISED ME A PROMPT RESPONSE. OUR SMALL NEGOTIATING TEAM SHOULD BE STANDING BY TO COME TO ATHENS THIS WEEKEND IF, AS SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE, THE GOG AGREES AND WANTS TO RESUME THE NEGOTIATIONS MONDAY, JUNE 20, AS WE HAVE OFFERED. END SUMMARY.

2. I MET WITH BITSIOS EARLY THIS AFTERNOON AND MADE A CAREFULLY PREPARED PRESENTATION STRESSING KEY PHRASES AND POINTS FROM WRITTEN NOTES I HAD PREPARED BASED ON INSTRUCTIONS IN REF B. I DECIDED ON MY OWN TO BEGIN MY PRESENTA-
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TTION BY TELLING HIM THAT I UNDERSTOOD THAT WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO SAY WAS BASED ON CONSIDERATION OF THIS MATTER AND DECISIONS REACHED "AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS" OF THE USG--ALTHOUGH I ALSO EXPLAINED THAT I WAS TELLING HIM THIS ON AN UNINSTRUCTED BASIS SINCE I PERSONALLY FELT THAT HE AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS SHOULD BE AWARE OF IT. (COMMENT: I DID THIS BECAUSE I HAVE SENSED, AND EVEN LEARNED ON OCCASION FROM SENSITIVE SOURCES, THAT HE AND CARAMANLIS BELIEVE

THAT OUR NEGOTIATING POSITIONS ARE SOMETIMES DETERMINED AT PROFESSIONAL OR LOWER WORKING LEVELS IN THE USG AND DO NOT ALWAYS REFLECT CONCERNS AT THE TOPMOST LEVELS OF OUR GOVERNMENT WHERE THEY THINK THERE WOULD BE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN GREECE.) BITSIOS TOOK UP A PENCIL AND PAD OF PAPER.

3. IN SUM, MY PRESENTATION RAN AS FOLLOWS: THE USG IS READY TO RESUME AND CONCLUDE THE NEGOTIATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE THREE REMAINING ISSUES CAN BE RESOLVED SPEEDILY IF BOTH SIDES ARE PREPARED TO BE FORTHCOMING, COOPERATIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE, CONCILIATORY AND DETERMINED TO FINISH. THAT WAS OUR ATTITUDE AND WOULD BE OUR APPROACH. (COMMENT: I DID NOT REPEAT NOT GO SO FAR AS TO TELL HIM THAT WE HAD NEW POSITIONS WHICH WE THOUGHT WOULD MEET GREEK OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO THESE THREE REMAINING ISSUES, PREFERRING TO SAVE ANY SUCH INDICATIONS OR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS ITSELF.) WE WERE PREPARED TO CONTINUE TO ACCOMMODATE THE GOG'S DESIRE THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS TAKE PLACE IN A QUIET, CLASSIFIED, BEHIND-THE-SCENES WAY BY A SMALL GROUP IN ATHENS, PROVIDED THE GOG ALSO AGREED TO A SUBSEQUENT STEP IN THE PROCESS WHICH I WOULD SOON SPECIFY. OUR SMALL TEAM WAS PREPARED TO COME TO ATHENS AND RESUME THE NEGOTIATIONS ON MONDAY, JUNE 20 OR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, THE WEEK OF JUNE 27, OR SOME OTHER DATE DEEMED CONVENIENT AND DESIRABLE BY THE GOG. HOWEVER, SINCE WE BELIEVED WE WERE ON THE VERGE OF CONCLUDING THE NEGOTIATIONS WE WANTED TO REACH AGREEMENT NOW WITH THE GOG ON THE NEXT FOLLOWING STEP; AND THAT WOULD BE A FORMAL, PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED, CONCLUDING ROUND WHERE THE DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS WOULD BE INITIALED AND AN APPROPRIATE COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCING THE COMPLETION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BY THE NEGOTIATING TEAMS WOULD BE PUBLICLY RELEASED. WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO

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HAVE THAT FINAL, PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED, CONCLUDING ROUND IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE FORTHCOMING, CONFIDENTIAL, TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS, BUT WE WOULD NOT INSIST ON IT. IF THE GOG DESIRED SOME INTERVAL BEFORE SUCH A CONCLUDING ROUND--FOR EXAMPLE, OF 30 DAYS OR EVEN, PERHAPS, AS MUCH AS 60 DAYS--I WOULD REPORT THEIR PREFERENCE TO WASHINGTON AND I FELT IT WOULD BE SYMPATHETICALLY CONSIDERED. (COMMENT: I WANTED, IF POSSIBLE, TO NAIL DOWN A DATE OR AT LEAST A TIME FRAME FOR THE CONCLUDING ROUND AND NOT LEAVE IT AN OPEN-ENDED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WHICH MIGHT DRAG ON INDEFINITELY.) IF THE GOG WERE NOT READY AS YET TO REACH A DECISION ON THIS NEXT FOLLOWING STEP THAT WAS ALL RIGHT WITH US, AND WE WOULD NOT PRESS THEM TO REACH A DECISION BEFORE THEY WERE READY; HOWEVER, IN THAT EVENT, WE DID NOT CONSIDER IT WARRANTED OR ADVISABLE TO HAVE OUR SMALL TEAM RETURN TO ATHENS NEXT WEEK FOR THE FINAL TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS, AND WE WOULD AWAIT FURTHER WORD FROM THEM AS TO WHEN THEY WOULD BE READY TO PROCEED.

4. BITSIOS ASKED FOR SOME CLARIFICATIONS, TAKING NOTES ON WHAT I SAID. IN OUR ENSUING DISCUSSION I ENDEAVORED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT WE WERE NOT PRESENTING THE GOG WITH SOME KIND OF ULTIMATUM BUT RATHER MAKING A PROPOSAL WHICH SEEMED EMINENTLY REASONABLE TO US ABOUT THE BEST WAY TO PROCEED. THE TIME HAD OBVIOUSLY COME TO LOOK BEYOND WHAT APPEARED TO BE THE FINAL SHORT ROUND OF TECHNICAL NEGOTIATING
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SESSIONS.

5. BITSIOS ASKED IF WE WERE INSISTING THAT THE SMALL, PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED, FINAL NEGOTIATING ROUND ALSO PROVIDE FOR A FULL POWERS' SIGNING AND EXCHANGING OF THE DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS, THUS FULLY COMMITTING THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. I SAID NO, THAT IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS WOULD MERELY BE INITIALED BY THE TWO NEGOTIATING TEAM LEADERS FOR SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO THE TWO GOVERNMENTS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION AND FINAL APPROVAL. MOREOVER, I ADDED, WE WERE NOT PROPOSING NOW ANY DEADLINE FOR THE GOVERNMENTS TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO APPROVAL OF THE AGREEMENTS NOR, FOR THAT MATTER, ANY DATE BY WHICH THE AGREEMENTS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO OUR RESPECTIVE PARLIAMENT AND CONGRESS. WE SIMPLY FELT THAT THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS ITSELF HAD TO HAVE A TERMINAL POINT AND THAT THIS HAD TO BE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED, SO THAT APPROPRIATE OTHER ELEMENTS IN BOTH GOVERNMENTS COULD BE INFORMED, AS WELL AS OUR ALLIES, FRIENDS AND POSSIBLE FOES. THIS IS WHAT THE COMMUNIQUE OF LAST OCTOBER HAD ENVISAGED AND SPECIFIED. SUCH AN

ACT WOULD ALSO CONSTITUTE ANOTHER MAJOR STEP TOWARD A FULL MODERNIZATION AND NORMALIZATION OF THE U.S.- GREEK SECURITY RELATIONSHIP AND TEND TO REMOVE SOME AMBIGUITY THAT STILL CLOUDED GREECE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE.

6. AFTER SOME FURTHER DISCUSSION BITSIOS SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH CARAMANLIS AND THE CABINET. IN RESPONSE TO MY SPECIFIC QUESTION HE SAID HE THOUGHT OUR PROPOSAL WAS "REASONABLE". HE EXPECTED THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE CONSIDERED AND THAT HE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO RESPOND TO ME PROMPTLY, (WHICH I TOOK TO MEAN WITHIN THE NEXT DAY OR SO). WHEN I RETURNED TO THE QUESTION AS TO WHEN THE TECHNICAL-LEVEL NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE RESUMED AND WHETHER HE THOUGHT WE MIGHT BETTER CONSIDER A DATE TOWARD THE MIDDLE OR END OF NEXT WEEK, OR PERHAPS EVEN THE FOLLOWING WEEK, BITSIOS SAID NO, THAT HE PERSONALLY FAVORED RESUMING THEM AS PREVIOUSLY ENVISAGED ON MONDAY, JUNE 20. "THE SOONER WE FINISH THESE TALKS AND NEGOTIATIONS, THE BETTER," HE SAID. WE PARTED ON AN ENCOURAGING, UP-BEAT NOTE.

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7. COMMENT: I THINK OUR MEETING WENT VERY WELL. LET'S KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED.

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